

# MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

## Success Stories from the Field

### Caribbean Outwear Corp.

Puerto Rico Manufacturing Extension Inc

#### New Market Opportunities with ISO

##### Client Profile:

Caribbean Outerwear, located in Yabucoa, Puerto Rico, provides services geared to the apparel industry, specifically the manufacture of jackets and polo shirts. It is a wholly owned subsidiary of Standard Manufacturing which is located in New York. The company currently employs 104 people.

##### Situation:

Due to foreign countries imports, production volume had gradually been reduced at Caribbean Outerwear, forcing the company to reduce costs by downsizing from 200 employees to 70 employees. This lack of business opportunities created a significant amount of unused space and idle sewing machines. Searching for US Department of Defense (DoD) contracts for such products as jackets became an important target. It was quickly recognized that for the bidding process there was a need for the company to become ISO 9001:2000 compliant. Caribbean Outerwear requested assistance from the Puerto Rico Manufacturing Extension Inc (PRIMEX) a NIST MEP network affiliate, to assess their process and to develop a Quality System that met federal contract requirements.

##### Solution:

A Project Manager from PRIMEX who had extensive experience with the ISO 9001:2000 standard developed a formal training program. Policy manuals and required documentation were created, internal auditors were trained, management guidance was provided and a simple computerized ISO management system was put in place. After various internal auditing sessions, on January 18, 2005, Caribbean Outerwear Corp. was certified under the ISO 9001:2000 standard and commended by the registrars for their good quality and customer service approach.

##### Results:

- \* Developed a Quality System in compliance with ISO 9001:2000 standard for a savings of over \$25,000.
- \* Awarded a 5-year, \$6 million contract with DOD for Jr. ROTC jackets.
- \* Awarded a 3-year, \$2.7 million contract with US Air Force for Physical Training jackets.
- \* Hired 104 new employees.

##### Testimonial:

"PRIMEX's support was essential in the preparation of our company to be able to be certified under the ISO 9001:2000 Standard. Certification under the ISO 9001:2000 was necessary for Caribbean Outerwear's survival. We plan to continue requesting their support to make sure we continue our improvement efforts that will allow us to obtain more business and increase our labor force in Puerto Rico."

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Carlos Sepulveda, Plant Manager